

What is claimed is:

1. A flexible, reclosable package for containing a product and allowing the product to be subjected to a retort process while within the reclosable package, comprising:

a pair of side panels joined along a first side edge and a second side edge, the side panels defining a mouth providing access to a package interior, wherein the side panels are formed from polypropylene; and

a reclosable zipper positioned along the mouth of the package for selectively opening and closing the package mouth, the reclosable zipper including a first closure profile attached to the first side panel and a second closure profile attached to the second side panel, wherein the first and second closure profiles are each constructed and arranged to interlock each other to hold the mouth in a closed position, wherein the reclosable zipper is formed from polypropylene,

wherein the first closure profile includes a sealing flange having a sealant, wherein the sealant of the sealing flange is attached to the second side panel opposite the first closure profile during the retort process to provide a hermetic seal between the sealing flange and the second side panel.

2. The reclosable package of claim 1 further comprising a line of weakness positioned between the sealing flange and an attachment flange of the first closure profile, wherein the sealing flange separates from the attachment flange along the line of weakness and remains attached to the second side panel of the reclosable package upon initial opening of the reclosable package.

3. The reclosable package of claim 2 wherein the sealant is a polypropylene-based sealant.

4. The reclosable package of claim 1 wherein the sealant is a releasable sealant such that the sealant separates from the second side panel to permit the sealing flange to separate from the second side panel upon initial opening of the product package.

5. The reclosable package of claim 2 wherein the sealing flange includes a plurality of lines of weakness positioned between the attachment flange and an outer end of the sealing flange.

6. The reclosable package of claim 1 wherein the sealant is applied to a first face surface of the sealing flange and a second sealant is applied to an opposite, second face surface of the sealing flange, wherein the second sealant engages the first side panel.

7. The reclosable package of claim 6 wherein the second sealant is a permanent sealant and the first sealant is a releasable sealant such that the sealing flange separates from the second side panel and remains attached to the first side panel upon initial opening of the product package.
8. The reclosable package of claim 1 wherein the second closure profile includes a second sealing flange, the second sealing flange having a second sealant, wherein the first sealing flange and the second sealing flange engage each other to provide a hermetic seal across the package interior.
9. The reclosable package of claim 8 wherein the first sealant and the second sealant are each a releasable sealant.
10. The reclosable package of claim 8 wherein the first and second sealing flanges are movable relative to the first and second side panels.
11. The reclosable package of claim 1 wherein the sealant is applied to a first face surface of the sealing flange and a heat resistant layer is applied to a second, opposite face surface of the sealing flange to prevent attachment of the sealing flange to the first side panel.

12. The reclosable package of claim 11 wherein the heat resistant layer is applied in a series of ribs along the second face surface of the sealing flange.

13. The reclosable package of claim 1, wherein the first closure profile is formed from a first material and the sealing flange is formed from a second material.

14. The reclosable package of claim 13 wherein the sealing flange includes a first end attached to the first closure profile and a second end having a sealant such that the second end can be attached to the second side panel.

15. The reclosable package of claim 14 wherein the sealant is a releasable sealant such that the sealant separates from the second side panel to permit the sealing flange to separate from the second side panel upon initial opening of the product package.

16. The reclosable package of claim 14 further comprising a line of weakness formed in the sealing flange between the first end and the second end of the sealing flange.

17. A flexible, reclosable package for containing product such that the product can be subjected to a retort process while within the reclosable package, comprising:

a pair of side panels joined along a first side edge and a second side edge, the panels defining a mouth providing access to a package interior, the side panels being formed from polypropylene; and

a reclosable zipper positioned along the mouth of the package for selectively opening and closing the package mouth, the reclosable zipper including a first closure profile attached to the first side panel and a second closure profile attached to the second side panel, wherein the first and second closure profiles are each constructed and arranged to interlock each other to hold the mouth in a closed position, wherein the reclosable zipper is formed from polypropylene,

wherein the first closure profile includes a first connecting flange and the second closure profile includes a second connecting flange, wherein the first and second connecting flanges are joined to each other during the retort process to prevent product from entering between the first and second closure profiles.

18. The reclosable package of claim 17 wherein the first and second connecting flanges are integrally formed with each other and include a line of weakness such that the first and second connecting flanges separate from each other along the line of weakness upon initial opening of the product package.

19. The reclosable package of claim 18 wherein the line of weakness is formed in an apex formed by the first and second connecting flanges.

20. The reclosable package of claim 17 wherein the first and second connecting flanges are formed from a membrane, wherein the membrane is formed from a first material and the first and second closure profiles are formed from a second, different material.

21. The reclosable package of claim 17 wherein the first connecting flange includes a first sealant and the second connecting flange includes a second sealant, wherein the first and second sealants engage each other to attach the first connecting flange to the second connecting flange.

22. The reclosable package of claim 21 wherein the sealant is a releasable sealant.